

## 'Unjustified' SIR Controversy Brings Parliament to a Standstill



The Monsoon Session of India's Parliament is facing a significant deadlock as a fierce standoff between the government and the Opposition over the Special Intensive Review (SIR) of electoral rolls has intensified. The Opposition, led by the INDIA bloc, is demanding an immediate discussion on the matter, while the government has refused, citing legal and procedural precedents. This stalemate has largely paralyzed legislative proceedings, with little business being conducted since the session began on July 21.

The controversy revolves around an ongoing electoral roll cleanup exercise in Bihar, which the Opposition has labeled as "vote-chori" or "vote-stealing." Opposition leaders, including Rahul Gandhi, allege that the process is being used to remove the names of voters sympathetic to their parties deliberately. They claim the exercise could disenfranchise millions of legitimate voters, thereby undermining the democratic process. The INDIA bloc has planned a dinner meeting to strategize and a protest march to the Election Commission (EC) office in New Delhi to press its demands.

The government, however, has maintained its position, arguing that the issue is a matter for the independent Election Commission and not a subject for parliamentary debate. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijju has cited a past ruling by a former Lok Sabha speaker that the House cannot discuss the administrative work of a constitutional body like the EC. The government also points to the EC's statement, which has rejected the Opposition's allegations

as "baseless" and "misleading." The EC has also disclosed that it is planning to roll out the same exercise nationally to "protect the integrity" of the electoral rolls.

Amid the political slugfest, the government is attempting to move forward with its legislative agenda. In the Lok Sabha, the government has listed the National Sports Governance Bill for consideration and passage, which aims to bring greater transparency to the functioning of sports bodies. In the Rajya Sabha, a resolution to extend President's Rule in Manipur is scheduled for discussion. Despite these efforts, the Opposition's determined protests are likely to continue, casting a cloud over the remainder of the session and raising questions about its productivity. The ongoing dispute highlights the deep political divisions as key states prepare for upcoming elections.